

Abraham Lincoln

A MEMORIAL



Y. M. C. A.

*Lincoln was a great leader of
men and a leader of great men.*

WILLIAM REID CURRAN



To

Albert H. Giffeth.

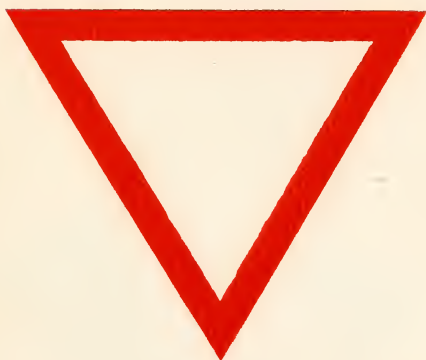
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W.
William Reid Curran

January 18, 1918.

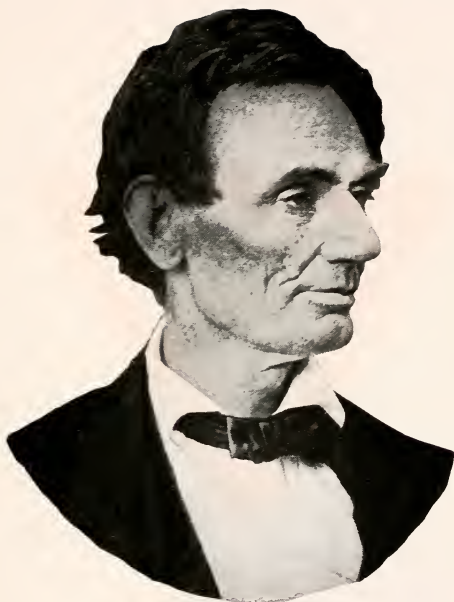
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This picture is made from a negative taken from life, by Henry H. Cole, in Peoria in 1858. Mr. Cole lost original negative by fire. Negative here used is from a photograph taken from a photograph printed from lost negative, and reprinted November 27, 1917, at his gallery in the City of Pekin, which is the source from which the plate is made that prints this picture. Mr. Cole is in his eighty-fourth year and is probably the dean of the photographers of Illinois.



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P R E F A C E.

This memorial was prepared and delivered at the City of Pekin, February 12, 1909, on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, celebrated by Joe Hanna Post of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was then substantially in its present form. Its preparation and delivery was a labor of love, expended for those who love Liberty. In this crisis of the world's history, this awful cataclysm between autocratic power and democracy, it is rededicated by its author, gladly and freely to that Christian statesman of the Kingdom, John R. Mott, and the war work council of the Young Men's Christian Association, who are so bravely and valiantly carrying the work of the Good Samaritan beneath the smoke of battle, in the trenches and on the shining decks of the navies of the world, with the hope that this little book may go wherever the red triangle goes, and that the spirit of the Great Emancipator may help a little to make the world safer for the lovers of liberty.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM REID CURRAN.

Pekin, Illinois, November 26, 1917.

Abraham Lincoln

A MEMORIAL

In the morning of time it was written:

"He stretcheth out the North
over empty space,
And hangeth the earth upon
nothing."

* * * * *

"He putteth forth his hand upon
the flinty rock;
He overturneth the mountains
by the roots.
He cutteth out channels among the
rocks,
And his eye seeth every precious
thing."

This is a great truth uttered by the voice of the primitive children of men. When we look; we see the same truth, written in the earth, upon the flinty rock, among the roots of the overturned mountains, in the channels cut in the rocks and in the many waters of the earth; we see and know the truth that there is no precious thing but by the finger of God.

In the mountain fastness of the Sierras, on the western slope of this virgin continent, in a canyon of a tributary of the mighty Columbia, where it rolls to the sea, is a great medallion, in the side of the mountain, high above the rushing waters; cut in the flinty rock where the mountains were uprooted, chiseled in the channels among the rocks; as the ages have passed by, the frost of winter and the heat of summer, the snow and rain, the earthquake, the blasts of the mountain storm, the soft breath of spring, the shock of the lightning and the gentle touch of the dew; these forces have wrought and finished the picture, ages before man saw the mountain.

The medallion is the profile of the great Emancipator. It is so life-like and vivid in its lines, as to be almost uncanny to the beholder. It may be co-incident that in the rugged granite are limned on the mountain side, the sad and tender image of this Martyr of Liberty. That his ideals and personality have been engraved on the heart and mind of

the world is not accident. That fact is the fulfillment of the law of the spirit. The result followed its cause as the fruit follows the flower. The image cut in the rocks may be an accident wrought by the forces of Nature. That men should love liberty and love him who died for liberty, is divine. This is the precious thing that the eye of Divinity beholds in us. The medallion will last as long as the mountain. Our love for the man will span eternity. The material perishes with time. The ideal and spiritual only are eternal.

"The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it will never forget what (he) did here."

Greatness was at flood tide in the year 1809; the world was then blessed in the birth of genius, in the realm of literature, invention, music, science and state craft. In that year occurred the birth of Edgar Allen Poe, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Alfred Tennyson, all famous in letters; of Cyrus H. McCormick, whose invention of the reaper was the first

real advance upon the reaping hook, used by Ruth in the fields of Boaz; of Mendelssohn and Chopin, who challenged the admiration of the world in creative harmony; of Charles R. Darwin, who made mankind debtor to him in fields of unexplored science; of William Ewart Gladstone, who was a colossal figure in the government of Europe; of Abraham Lincoln who dominated the state craft of the western hemisphere, preserved the Union, and made millions of serfs free men.

It was a great year in a great century of the evolution of democracy. In the sense here used democracy is defined, by one who is an advanced and clear thinker, on the subject to be "A social institution or state made up of individuals whose actuating principles of life is this: that they will have nothing, will accept nothing, but what every other individual in the whole compact shall be entitled to have—exactly the same thing on exactly the same terms; and whose united effort shall be to establish such ways and

means as shall make the working principle of each individual actualized in all the out-workings of the State as a whole."

This is an epoch-making idea. A man of genius imbued with this ideal is destined to be an epoch maker. His life is a menace to the special privilege of one individual over another, and the dominant right of one man over his fellowmen. The vested rights of the few, to the exclusion of the many on like terms, are a stench in his nostrils and the fact that he lives, makes battle a certainty. The life of such a man must make history. The chapters of its story will be of progress toward the realization of the dominant ideal. To him the plan of progress is:

"Where the vanguard camps today,
The rear shall rest to-morrow."

Abraham Lincoln, born in the wilderness, rocked in the cradle of poverty, fed on the bread of bitterness, taught in the wisdom of the clods of the valley and the stars of the

heavens, was an heir to this ideal, and these conditions.

He stood alone, a product of the evolution of democracy; in characteristics without a predecessor, without a fellow, and without a successor.

"Nature, they say, doth dote,

And cannot make a man

Save on some worn-out plan,

Repeating us by rote.

For him, her Old-World moulds aside she threw,

And choosing sweet clay from the breast

Of the unexhausted west

With stuff untainted, shaped a hero new,

Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true."

The mettle of the blue-grass pastures of Kentucky gave him birth; but the sheltering woods of Indiana and the blooming prairies of Illinois, developed and matured him to the flower and fruitage of his great manhood.

He was born a plebian and was glad of it when he said, "God must have liked common people, for He made so many of them." The common people liked him and heard him

gladly. He always was and now is numbered among them; reared in the wilderness, the child of the frontier of a new civilization, free from traditions and conventionalities, uninfluenced by the schools, and not enervated by the fevered ideals of the older civilizations; it was not necessary for this man, to serve a Midian probation to make him a great leader of his people.

The foot-hills are not the proper point of vantage from which to view the mountains' grandeur; only distance lends the angle of vision wide enough to comprehend the impressive magnitude and beauty of God's great handiwork. The lines are long, rugged, angular, rough and severe in a close view; but how harmonious, strong, graceful and full of beauty they are in the view from the distant plain! As wide space is necessary to see the mountains' beauty, so distance, in time, is required to study the character of this great man and learn his strength and grandeur.

But little more than fifty years have passed since this man fell by the blow of an assassin induced by hate. His short public life in the eye of the nation was lived amid the roar of cannon, the clash of musketry, the shock of battle, the curses of defeat and the shouts of victory; but only now, are we come to the stillness after the storm, when we can commence to know him and appreciate the grandeur of his character and worth, uninfluenced by passion and hate or partial pride. While he wrought, he was refined by the white heat of the fierce fires that burned in the crucible of sectional hate. Fires that reduced the senate of the nation from the high level of dignified and orderly discussion to a scene of physical violence that spent its final force in the fierce conflict of neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother, and state against state. Amid it all, his heart was not corroded by hatred or a wish for vengeance. With more military power than Caesar, he was a minister of mercy. At Appomattox he received by

the hand of his commander in the field, the surrender of one of the greatest military leaders of his century. At Richmond, by his own hand, he ministered to the necessities of the victims of the lost cause.

As a member of Congress he ridiculed his military prowess. As President of the Republic, he was Commander-in-Chief of the mightiest armies of modern times. He used those forces, not for conquest of alien territory or the military glory of the Commander-in-Chief. No battle was fought, or victory won, except to preserve the integrity of the Union.

Amid the cares of the nation and the marching of its battallions, the coming and going of captains, he was not too much engrossed to write, or talk to the widow, pardon her son, for military offense or confer with the private soldier about his pension. The stars of the night were his watchmen, as he went, from tent to tent ministering to the wants of the sick and wounded after the battles. It was

the irony of fate, that this man's life should be so misunderstood that an enemy should kill him as a tyrant.

His death by violence was not an accident, or a decree of arbitrary providence. "He lived as he did, and died as he did, because he was what he was." His character placed him in the path of the destroyer. His life was the exponent of freedom for all men. The hand that struck him down was the representative of the Master of serfs. The blow was struck by stealth, because it came from the power of darkness, and "darkness comprehended not the light."

His was the crown of modesty. Throughout his life, he had sacrificed self that others might wear the laurel of victory. Among the leaders of the bar of his state, he considered his fellows better lawyers than himself. When called to the presidency of the Republic at the age of fifty-two, he came without training in national affairs, and without experience of any sort to fit him for the great

duties that devolved upon him, except his training as a lawyer. Mr. Lincoln was not trained as a logician and a lawyer in the schools. He was the product of frontier conditions. The University of Hard Knocks was his alma mater. He was in a large measure, self-taught in his profession. The old Eighth Judicial Circuit of Illinois was the scene of his professional activities. The bar of Illinois in his day in that circuit was the peer of any bar in the Nation. Illinois was then in the formative period of the development of the law. It produced a President of the United States, a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, members of the United States Senate of dominant force and leadership, congressmen of national reputation and governors of this state, who laid deep and wide its executive foundations and policies. In its courts, he met and practiced with such men as Davis, Edwards, Stewart, Fickland, Browning, Williams, Logan, Purple, Manning, Merriman, Dicky, Douglas, Baker,

Ford, Palmer, Yates, Oglesby, McDougal, Sweat, Wilson, Trumble, Wead, Prettyman, and a long list, fast fading from memory and love of all who knew them; for the name and fame of the lawyer, who has not military or political prominence are written on the sands of time and the waves of a new generation soon wash them into oblivion. The world knew, while he was at the Bar, that he was a great advocate. It is but now learning, from the records of the courts, that he was a lawyer of wide learning and accurate knowledge. Cases like Bailey against Cromwell and "The Effie Aften" case established beyond question, that he not only was a good lawyer, but a very great lawyer. At the threshold of his administration lurked armed rebellion with the firm resolution to dismember the Union. He was doubtful of his ability to perform the great task that rested upon him, "greater than that which rested upon Washington." His countrymen were apprehensive. Continental Europe prophesied failure and the end of the republic seemed imminent.

Abraham Lincoln was chosen president, not because of his personality or availability, but on account of the ideals that he represented. The issue was clearly joined and freedom won the ballot, though in the minority. Not all the miraculous victories of the few over the many, and the weak over the strong are written in ancient Hebrew history.

It was not in the great debates of 1858 alone, that the ideals of Lincoln became known to his countrymen; they were first stated in Peoria, in reply to his great antagonist, on October 16, 1854. It was on this day, and at this place that the great Emancipator set his face toward the presidency and martyrdom.

In that great address, speaking of slavery, he said:

"I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and

especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticising the declaration of independence and insisting that there is no right principal of action but self interest."

* * * * *

"What I do say is, that no man is good enough to govern another man without that others consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet-anchor of American Republicanism.

"But Nebraska is urged as a great Union saving measure. Well, I too, go for saving the Union. Much as I hate slavery, I would consent to the extension of it, rather than see the Union dissolved; just as I would consent to any great evil to avoid a greater one."

* * * * *

"Slavery is founded on the selfishness of man's nature. Opposition to it is his love of justice. These principles are an eternal antagonism and when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal the Missouri Compromise, repeal all compromises, repeal the Declaration of Independence; repeal all past history; you still cannot repeal human nature."

On the 15th of August, 1855, in a private letter to a personal friend, he wrote:

"Our political problem now is, can we as a nation, continue together permanently—forever—half slave and half free? The problem is too mighty for me—May God, in His mercy, superintend the solution."

This was a long time prior to his announcement that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

At Independence Hall, on his way to Washington to his inauguration with the threat and menace of assassination hovering over him, in closing his address, he said:

"But I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by and if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, to die by."

In August, 1862, amid the darkness, doubt and censure of friend and foe, he wrote:

"If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My

paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help save the Union."

With him, integrity and a fixed purpose were matters of principle and not of proclamation. He was chosen president as a radical, but in his administration, he had the unstinted censure of both radicals and conservatives. His heart was tender and pliable as a child's in matters of mercy. Neither the threats of one faction or cajolery of the other moved him an iota from his fixed purpose. His paramount purpose was to prevent the extension of slavery and ultimately to abolish it. His mind grasped the fundamental truth that the Union must be preserved to assure liberty to the white man as well as

the black man. That freedom to the slave without the Union would be a curse to both the slave and master; that the one without the other would be but an apple of the dead sea, that would wither to ashes in the hand that plucked it.

No act of his and no word reveals an uncertain moment in this matter. His mind was fixed on it, and there was no variableness or shadow made by turning.

At his first inaugural, speaking to the nation, his closing words were:

"In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it. I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave

to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be by the better angels of our nature."

Here the statesman rose almost to the altitude of a prophet.

While these words were being uttered from the steps of the Capitol, secession was looking him in the face and whetting its sword for the fray. His matchless strategy put the government in the right and its enemies in the wrong. He waited until slavery attacked the Union. In repelling that attack, his great opportunity came. The Union was saved and slavery was destroyed at one blow. Slavery brought on the war and was devoured by the dogs of war that it loosed from their leash.

Lincoln was a great leader of men and a leader of great men. His choice of a cabinet put him in the front rank. He chose as his constitutional advisors those who had been candidates against him in the national con-

vention, on the theory that they would be of more service to the nation and less detrimental to his administration in the cabinet than out of it. He was expected to be the tool of his cabinet. There was rivalry to determine who should dominate him. His matchless tact neutralized the idea. The members of his political family soon learned that his was the dominant mind of the administration.

Emancipation was considered long before the event. The radicals urged it, and the conservatives derided it. Its friends censured him as vacillating, its enemies as a tyrant, if he attempted it. With patience borne of his great soul and the grace of God, this lone man of the west wrestled with the problem. With the draft of the great document in his desk, ready for signature, week after week he met delegations of strong men, who came to urge such a measure. He argued against it with such a vigor, to get the benefit of their arguments for it, that the Nation was con-

vinced that he never would do it. He let the delegations come and go, day after day, without a hint of what he intended to do; while he waited for a victory to give the proclamation force.

When the time came, he told the cabinet, what he was going to do. He told them that he had promised his God that he would do it. He said he would accept suggestions from them as to the form of the document, but not as to the advisability of the act. He said the responsibility was his. In the Nation's throes of dissolution, he issued the proclamation as a war measure to save the Union. This is the crowning act of his great life and because of it, the laurel of the victor's crown rests upon his brow, and his name is today hailed by the glad acclaim of the world's millions, who love liberty. Between the proclamation and the fall of the confederacy was the darkness before the dawn. Into it, the Nation and its great leader went under the pall and shadow of death and the flower of the sons of

the North and the flower of the sons of the South were the sacrifice, before the dawning.

The fixed purpose and loving heart of this great man are finally revealed in the closing sentences of his second inaugural. This is almost his last public utterance to the Nation:

"Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continues until all wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequitted toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the Nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow—and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

No more exalted utterance than this has

been made by the tongue of man since the Gallilean uttered the beatitudes at the Horns of Hattin.

Those who attempt to account for Abraham Lincoln are met by many contradictions. They assume that his character was simple, easily understood, and that he took all men into his confidence. They are surprised to find that he was complex in character, his life misunderstood, and that he probably never took any one man into his entire confidence. It has been supposed that he was without ambition; yet without ambition he never would have been President of the Republic. He was censured for too much levity and not deep enough of mind to comprehend the gravity of the Nation's woes; yet we know that his smiles and wit covered a breaking heart while he trod the wine press in misery; his face wreathed in laughter, his heart melted in tears. He patiently bore the reputation of a cruel tyrant; while he was in the gall of bitterness, in sympathy for all who

suffered. He was great enough to bear the stigma of a weakling at the hands of his friends while he waited to show them that he was strong enough to lead the Nation to salvation.

The son of a Father and a Mother, who could not write and without a liberal education, he was one of the matchless masters of the English tongue. Untaught by the teachers of logic, he was easily the greatest political logician of his age. Without the aid of the teachers of oratory, he was among the greatest political controvertionalists of his time. With few of the graces of the orator, he delivered the most notable orations of his century. With the reputation of a rebel against God, he passed across the stage of action, like one of the patriarchs of old, knowing that "The just shall live by faith" God-fearing and God-led.

"Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to
face."

* * * * *

"He knew to bide his time.
And can his fame abide
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.
Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes;
These are all gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American."

